

output of physicians by our medical schools be doubled by 1980. I think that we have accomplished this, so we no longer need to rob foreign countries of their young doctors. However, most of the increase here will stay in the big cities—too bad!

Congratulations on the expansion of THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE.

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A Physician's Assistant Responds

TO THE EDITOR: In the December issue is a letter by Dr. Frank Z. Reade discussing physician's assistants.

Dr. Reade states that some physician's assistants give the impression to patients that they are doctors, yet the law which regulates physician's assistants plainly states that each patient who is seen by a physician's assistant must sign a consent form that states the patient realizes he is being seen by a physician's assistant. Also, the law states that a physician's assistant must wear an identification badge stating the assistant's name and the title "Assistant to the Primary Care Physician," when rendering medical services.

It is against the law for a physician's assistant to call himself a doctor. It is also against the law for persons who have not finished an approved program to call themselves physician's assistants. If Dr. Reade has come in contact with some of these persons, I suggest that he report the incidents to the California Board of Medical Quality Assurance.

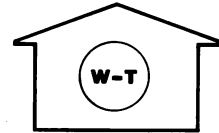
Concerning malpractice, a member of the Physician's Assistant Examining Committee of the Board of Medical Quality Assurance informed me that there have been no cases of malpractice brought against physician's assistants in the state of California.

The use of properly supervised physician's assistants is a way in which doctors can increase the quality of health care and increase the number of patients served. And no one is more interested in maintaining the integrity of this new profession than are physician's assistants themselves. We are interested in informing doctors and the public about the laws governing physician's assistants and the value they have.

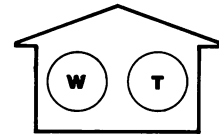
JAMES HANKS III, PA-C

The House of Medicine

TO THE EDITOR: Once upon a time doctors cared for patients and also taught their colleagues and students. Some worked well and some worked badly. Some taught well and others taught badly. But all had a duty both to work with patients and to teach. The house of medicine, thus, was one. Let us illustrate this schematically:

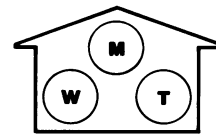


Medicine being a conservative profession, this edifice persisted over the centuries virtually unchanged. That is, until the dawn of the 1900's when a few doctors split away from their working colleagues. They began to teach a lot more than they worked with patients. These men so impressed a certain Mr. Abraham Flexner that he launched a crusade to institutionalize their existence. Thus was academic medicine born. And thus the house of medicine came to know two inhabitants:



Over the years, these working doctors and teaching doctors lived in more-or-less peaceful coexistence in their respective towns and gowns. But then a stranger appeared. Lacking in personality, he became known as the third party, and he paraded in a multitude of guises. Strangely, he was not always welcome. Strange because he sought only to transfer money into the coffers of the house of medicine.

Painfully aware was this third party that he was not a physician himself. Yet he took his own work seriously. Honesty compelled that measurements involving the transfer of his money be made. Thus was the *measuring* doctor, the steward of the third party's funds, born; a doctor, because only doctors know how to measure what doctors do. So now the house of medicine knew three:



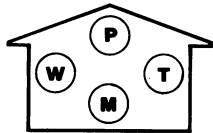
The third party grew stronger and richer. He transferred more and more funds. And he demanded ever more measurements. Soon it became

CORRESPONDENCE

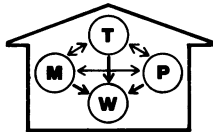
clear that there was much more to measure than the transfer of funds. One could also measure how the workers worked, and how the teachers taught. The measuring doctor learned to do both.

But the task grew even more complex. Teaching doctors began to teach the measurers to measure just as the measurers first taught the teachers how to teach and the workers how to work.

Yet the third party was still not satisfied. Not a doctor himself, he began to worry that the workers, teachers and measurers might become friends. And that their ardor for working, teaching and measuring might diminish in the glow of good fellowship. The solution was clear: the policing doctor quietly appeared. And the house of medicine came to know four:



The house became crowded, and it became difficult to breathe. Nonetheless, all kept busy. The teachers taught everyone. The measurers measured everyone. And the police policed everyone. The workers simply worked.



The anatomy and physiology of the house of medicine were difficult to comprehend, even to its own inhabitants. Demanding explanations, the

third party also became restless; transfers of funds now came reluctantly and with ill will.

Medicine's inhabitants looked over their shoulders with increasing alarm. Their activities grew more frenzied. Workers worked harder. Teachers taught harder. Measurers measured harder. And police policed harder. The walls bulged and the roof threatened to burst. The inhabitants fought for space and air. The third party tapped his foot impatiently.

It was the workers who first noticed the disequilibrium of arrows. They complained but, outnumbered and out-arrowed, there was little they could do. Taught, measured and policed, they still continued to work—as well as could be expected.

Unhappy with all, however, the third party now brandished his funds and stamped his foot. The inhabitants were startled. Some ran towards the third party. Others huddled together in fear. Holes appeared in the walls of the house of medicine and winds blew through the holes.

Still, the house stood. Trembling, the remaining inhabitants worked on the walls. Gradually and ever so carefully, they also began to examine one another. More virtue than evil met the eye. The light of good fellowship glimmered, then gleamed. Work resumed, but more calmly—teaching, more quietly; policing, more gently; measuring, more carefully.

The third party never was satisfied.

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